

# Think Training

Encouraging and promoting the training of God's people for ministry

Issue 9 Summer 2009

**Welcome** to the latest Training Bulletin!

How far ahead do you plan your church programmes and activities? How far ahead are you thinking about your church life and witness? How far ahead are you planning who will lead and serve the church? How far-reaching is your vision?

When Jesus trained and then commissioned his disciples, he gave them a task which was to occupy their lifetimes and longer: to be his witnesses "to the ends of the earth." And because the vision was so large – a global vision, we might say today – he told them they would need all possible resources: his authority – "all authority in heaven and on earth", his presence – "to the very end of the age" – and the unstoppable power of his Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 1:8).

In our local churches, you may think, we are hardly in the business of planning the evangelisation of the world. But in FIEC – local churches working together nationally – we must be in the business of planning the evangelisation of the nation, and of the regions and localities that we have access to. And we must be in the business of planning for the evangelisation of future generations, as Jesus was. We must 'Think Tomorrow'!

This, in essence, is what training is all about. It is action today to prepare for tomorrow. It is thinking and planning ahead. It is sowing now in order to reap then. Or, to change the metaphor (as Paul does in 1 Corinthians 3), it is to be sure that when we lay a foundation for others to build on. We do so as an "expert builder", encouraging each one to "be careful how he builds" (1 Corinthians 3:10).

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It is this conviction about preparing for the **future** that underlies the work of **FIEC Training**. In this bulletin **John Stevens** presents a rationale for the work of the Pastoral Development Team, seeking to map out 'routes into ministry' for potential pastors, and commenting on the first tangible results of that Team's work in the Theological Students' Conference. We are grateful to **Lee Campbell**, one of the students who attended that conference, for an informative and enthusiastic report. Then we have from **Marcus Honeysett** a typically incisive analysis of what happens when the 'forward movement' in church life comes to an abrupt halt – when a church 'stalls'. **Jonathan Fletcher**, one of our many Anglican friends, shares his experience of training pastoral assistants or apprentices in Wimbledon, and we have an interview with the new Director of Ministry for the Proclamation Trust, **Adrian Reynolds**. Adrian has been pastor of Yateley Baptist Church and, significantly, is the first Free Church man to occupy that key Proclamation Trust post.

Do please read these articles and make whatever use of them you can. Do please engage by email with our authors if you want to follow up what they have written. And do please share with us your own observations or experiences of training which might be a help to others. Contributions are always welcome!

This bulletin is produced on behalf of the **FIEC Training Team** which currently consists of Ray Evans, Martyn Hallett, Marcus Honeysett, Paul Mallard, John Stevens and Richard Underwood.

Whatever we are doing in our own churches and ministries to serve the Lord, let us remember to 'Think Tomorrow' and to 'Think Training'. Above all, "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2).

### **Martyn Hallett**

(Chairman of the Training Team and Editor of 'Think Training')

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# The Pastoral Development Team and the Free Church Theological Students Conference

*John Stevens, Chairman of the Pastoral Development Team, reports on the progress the Team is making and the significance of the Theological Students' Conference held at the start of this year (see also the report of the Conference by Lee Campbell, which follows).*

One of the greatest challenges facing FIEC churches is the need to identify, train and deploy a new generation of pastors for the future. The statistics are frightening. Many churches are already finding it difficult to fill a pastoral vacancy. The age profile of FIEC pastors suggests there will be a very large number of retirements over the next ten to fifteen years, which will create a great need for new leaders. In the face of this unavoidable challenge, we can be confident that God will always provide his church with sufficient gifted men to equip his people to do the work of ministry (Ephesians 4:11-12).

If we lack the pastor-teachers needed to lead our churches, it is not because God has failed to provide enough gifted men. All too often, however, we fail to identify, develop and deploy the gifted men that God has given to the church. In various ways we erect unnecessary obstacles and hurdles that make it more difficult for men to put themselves forward to serve, with the result that the church as a whole is damaged. In past generations there was a marked reluctance positively to encourage men to enter pastoral ministry – perhaps because the pastorate was still a high status job, often with the provision of good accommodation and an attractive salary, so that men aspired to be pastors for the wrong reasons. But today pastoral ministry is generally unattractive. It is often poorly paid, and carries little or no status in society compared to the jobs that enjoyed comparable professional status a hundred years ago. It is much more important in our current circumstances to encourage as many men as possible to consider making the sacrifice to enter ministry, and to make it as easy as possible for those of suitable gifts and character to make themselves available to serve the church.

One particular problem that we face in our constituency is the lack of a clearly identifiable “route” into Free Church ministry. In contrast to the conservative evangelical Anglicans, who have a well established and clear process by which men are encouraged, selected and trained for ministry, and then helped to find suitable training posts in churches; the routes into Free Church ministry are all too often haphazard and ill-defined. There is confusion over both the nature and meaning of “calling” into the ministry and the most appropriate form of training, and often there is a lack of access to the necessary funding. Whilst there are many weaknesses in the Anglican system, it has, over the past twenty or more

years, managed to encourage a large number of gifted men into bible-centred church ministry, which is bearing much fruit for the kingdom. In a culture in which many Christians have little innate denominational loyalty, a gifted man who feels a pull to full-time ministry may face the choice of following a well-defined and well-funded route into Anglican ministry, or an uncertain and generally poorly funded route into Free Church ministry. It is not surprising that many men are tempted to choose the Anglican route.

## Pastoral Development Team

The Pastoral Development Team (PDT), which is a sub-committee of the FIEC Training Team, was tasked by the FIEC Council with examining and improving the route into Free Church ministry, with the aim of encouraging men of suitable gifting and character to train to serve our churches in the future. The PDT has now been meeting for just over two years, and has been considering the weaknesses of our current mechanisms for encouraging men into ministry, and prayerfully considering whether we might be able to suggest a clearer route for men to enter ministry. We are very aware that the FIEC consists of a wide diversity of churches, some of which are large but many of which are small, and that a “one size fits all” approach will not meet the needs of our constituency as a whole. We realise that for some men the best route into ministry will be to undertake full-time theological training, then to serve as an assistant minister before taking pastoral charge of a church. For others it may be more appropriate, or realistic, to undertake part-time training, perhaps whilst working in a secular job or serving their church in some capacity.

Whatever route is appropriate for each individual, we want to make sure that the training received is faithful, relevant and practical, and to this end we have been meeting with a variety of institutions and training organisations to discuss how they are meeting the needs of Free Church students. In the Training Bulletin for Autumn 2008 (No.8), available on the FIEC website, there are contributions from three Theological College Principals setting out their vision for pastoral training. We are also aware that we need to raise up a generation of pastor-teacher-evangelists who will be suitably gifted to grow churches, and where necessary plant new churches. We need men who are able to do more than simply maintain the status quo or manage decline in our churches, if the nation is to be reached for Christ.

Our work has been slow, partly because the members of the PDT are all busy in ministry themselves, but also because we want to take adequate time to reflect carefully on our current weaknesses, our future needs, and how these might be overcome and met. Our long-term aim is to develop a coherent route for men considering the possibility of full-time ministry. This might include giving clear advice about the “call” to ministry, providing a conference for men who might be considering the possibility of ministry, or whose pastors

would like them to consider the possibility of ministry, so that they can be encouraged and informed. Where appropriate it may mean encouraging men considering ministry to undertake an apprenticeship in a church so as to gain some experience of what Christian leadership is like, so that their gifts and suitability can be tested. We will provide advice on appropriate training, seeking to ensure that men get the best training they can so that they are equipped for a lifetime of service, and equipped to counter the old and new heresies they will have to confront during their ministries.

We hope to establish a training fund that will be able to provide financial support for men to attend Bible College if they would not otherwise be able to do so, and to provide ongoing mentoring while they are undertaking their training. We would like to encourage larger churches to establish training posts for assistant ministers, so that those who have completed theological training will have the opportunity to come and serve alongside an experienced minister before taking charge of a church. Whilst it is costly for an individual church to provide such a post, especially since the fruits of their investment will often be enjoyed by another fellowship, it is vital that we recognise that most men are not ready to lead a church simply because they have been to college, and that many of the practical skills of pastoral ministry and church leadership can only be learned on the job. Above all we want to be able to create a coherent FIEC ministry identity, so that men consciously come forward to train to serve our constituency. We feel that these developments are vital for our own future, and that if we fail to invest adequately in training pastor-evangelists now we will reap disastrous consequences in fifteen years' time.

### **Theological Students' Conference**

Whilst we might have big ambitions, we are realistic about what can be accomplished. The task of the PDT is long-term, and it will only be achieved by taking little steps. We decided to start by organising a Free Church "Theological Students Conference" for men who are already in training for pastoral ministry. This was aimed at students studying full or part-time at colleges such as WEST (Wales Evangelical School of Theology), Oak Hill and LTS (London Theological Seminary), and also at those undertaking courses such as PFS who are preparing for pastoral ministry. The first conference took place on 26-27 January 2009 and was generously hosted by The Independent Chapel, Spicer Street, St Albans. Speakers were John Stevens, Marcus Honeysett, Andrew Evans and Trevor and Val Archer. One of the students present, Lee Campbell, has written a brief report on the conference from his perspective for this Training Bulletin.

We hope that by bringing these students together we will have begun to engender an understanding of the FIEC and the opportunities for service and ministry within our churches. The conference was both theological and practical, addressing key theological issues that Free

Church students face at Bible College, challenging them to maintain a personal devotion and love for the Lord and his people, and preparing them for the realities of church ministry. We plan to hold another similar conference next year; please do encourage any men that you know who are currently in training or who will be next year to come and join us for the conference.

Please pray for the ongoing work of the PDT. We feel that this is a strategically vital area for the future health of our churches, and the further extension of the kingdom of God through them.

### **John Stevens**

*John Stevens is one of the leaders of City Evangelical Church Birmingham, is on the FIEC Training Team and chairs the Pastoral Development Team. If you wish to respond to any of the issues he has raised please contact him at [john@city-church.org.uk](mailto:john@city-church.org.uk)*

## **The FIEC Theological Students Conference 2009**

*The Pastoral Development Team (see John Stevens' previous article) has begun to develop a strategy to give a more coherent approach to the training of men for gospel ministry. One element of the 'routes' into ministry which many men will follow is that of formal Theological College training. Lee Campbell, a student at Oak Hill College, reports on the first FIEC Conference for Theological Students.*

The first FIEC Theological Students' Conference took place on 26-27th January 2009 and was generously hosted by Spicer Street Church, St Albans. The conference was open to all theological students, but attracted students mainly from Oak Hill College and WEST. It was a fantastic opportunity for those starting out in pastoral ministry to glean from the wisdom and experience of more senior ministers.

### **John Stevens – The Vision for Free Church Ministry**

Young evangelicals are often drawn into the Anglican church by the belief that they can achieve more in winning the nation for Christ by being in the Established Church rather than outside it. They perceive that they get many opportunities for the gospel by being the "official" church man of the locality, whereas the Free Church is often regarded as the 'poorer cousin' due to its perceived lack of theological and pastoral training, cultural disengagement and failure to cooperate with others in gospel initiatives.

In the opening lecture of the conference John Stevens, minister of City Evangelical Church, Birmingham, challenged these prevailing assumptions and offered an insightful, challenging and winsome vision for Free Church ministry:

- 1) *A Vision for Ecclesiology*: Stevens argued that a Free Church ecclesiology actually releases churches from the denominational in-fighting and the hierarchical structures which so often inhibits our evangelical Anglican brothers in their pursuit of new gospel initiatives. Furthermore he suggested that the perceived cultural significance of the 'local parish church' is ever decreasing.
- 2) *A Vision for Gospel Unity*: Despite his criticisms of the Anglican Church, Stevens was also quick to call for every effort to be made to maintain gospel unity. In light of the immensity of the task of evangelising the UK, the time has come for the sharing of personnel and training resources through Gospel Partnerships. He urged a humble orthodoxy in which differences are addressed but with charity and respect.
- 3) *A Vision for Mission*: Stevens argued that believers ought to view themselves as strangers and aliens here, calling people into a new kingdom. He then suggested that the normal pattern to be expected for ministry in the UK context is slow growth through faithful Gospel proclamation. Therefore the Gospel minister needs patience, perseverance and prayerful persistence.
- 4) *A Vision for theological training*: As the future of the Church depends on the quality of its leaders (2 Tim. 2:2), Stevens stressed the need for formal theological training and the need for local churches to provide Assistant Minister roles and financial support for future leadership training.
- 5) *A Vision for Sacrifice and Suffering*: He concluded with the challenging thought that gospel ministry is characterised in the New Testament by hard labour, suffering and pain rather than financial security and academic respectability.

### **Marcus Honeysett – Leading to the Glory of God**

Marcus Honeysett, director of evangelical training ministry Living Leadership, ran two sessions on 'leading to the Glory of God'. He began by exploring the tacit motivations behind much of so-called 'gospel-ministry', such as 'giving the church a good theological education'; or 'running a series of well attended programs'. He took the attendees joy-spotting in Philippians in order that they might see that joy should be the hallmark of our Christian service. He argued that understanding God's grace in the gospel was the well-spring from which that joy flowed. Honeysett therefore contended that gospel ministry fundamentally involved leading other believers to delight in the joy of the Lord.

In the second session Honeysett unpacked *how* one might lead others to delight in the joy of the Lord. First, he advocated the regular preaching and teaching of the benefits of grace laid out in Scripture; the blessings of forgiveness, peace, hope, security, rescue, reconciliation and eternal life. Secondly he stressed the necessity of modelling the joy of the Lord, in the prayer life and pastoral care of the gospel minister. He concluded by

offering some practical suggestions as to how one might sustain a fruitful ministry in the midst of job and family pressures.

### **Andrew Evans – Preaching to Real People**

In addition to these sessions Andrew Evans, minister at Christ Church Liverpool, ran a seminar entitled 'Preaching to Real People'. He began by providing a helpful definition of preaching "*A (largely) monologue presentation of the teaching of Holy Scripture, by an authorised person, intending that the listeners present be conformed to the likeness of Christ*". He observed that preaching is much more than the transfer of information from the preacher's script to the listener's notebook; it involves much more than teaching the meaning of the text, although it is never less than that. Good preaching brings the word of God to bear on the whole person; heart soul, mind and strength.

Evans therefore argued that when preparing any sermon it is vital to trace out the implications of Scripture for real people in concrete terms, to equip them to respond to relationship difficulties; illness; work pressure; disappointment and disillusionment in a God glorifying way.

As biblical truth is not just a category of information, but also has moral and spiritual dimensions, so the gospel minister must be seen to model in his own life the truth he proclaims, otherwise he will inevitably face a crisis of credibility with his congregation. Thus Evans stressed the need for the preacher to watch his life and his doctrine closely. He urged prospective preachers to constantly be on their guard against the insidious nature of over-desires (idolatry) and legalism to which the gospel of grace provides a powerful antidote.

Evans concluded with a number of practical observations of what good preaching looks like in the local church context and especially the ways in which it should radically differ from the academic lecture.

### **Trevor and Val Archer – The Spiritual life of the Family in Leadership**

Trevor Archer, minister of Chessington Evangelical Church, and his wife Val, shared from their extensive experience the necessity of maintaining a healthy spiritual life within the family and then gave an insight into some of the particular pressures imposed upon the family while serving in ministry.

*"Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers..." (Acts 20:28a)*  
Trevor began by stressing the importance of attending to one's own spiritual health as a priority. He noted that if the gifts of a gospel minister are not developed in the context of love and delight in God, then the gifts themselves will be useless and the ministry will be shipwrecked. In order to foster spiritual health Trevor advocated the need for accountability relationships with other Christian friends.

Trevor then went on to say that the ‘flock’ for which the gospel minister is primarily responsible is his own wife and family. He argued that the gospel minister must model servant leadership in his home, which involves taking responsibility for the spiritual health of one’s wife, disciplining one’s children, and modelling repentance; nurturing their hearts to know and love the Lord.

Val then shared her understanding of the role of the minister’s wife. She strongly disavowed the “first lady of the church” paradigm which is often presupposed in free church circles. On the contrary she described her role as primarily one of a helper for her husband; freeing him up for the task of ministry. In addition the gospel minister’s wife ought to be a fellow soldier, a fellow theologian, and a one who literally calls her husband to practice what he preaches. Both shared lessons that they had learned from past difficulties, nevertheless both also testified to their experience of the sufficiency of God’s grace.

The conference succeeded in exposing the theological students who attended to some of the difficulties and opportunities for service within a free church context, and provided a helpful challenge to maintain a personal devotion and love for God and his people. The conference thus helped the attendees to prepare for some of the realities of church ministry, and I would warmly recommend it to all theological students.

### Lee Campbell

*Lee Campbell has just finished a BA in Theology and Pastoral Studies at Oak Hill, and has been involved in The Independent Chapel, Spicer Street, St.Albans. In September he will be moving to Emmanuel Evangelical Church, Leamington Spa, as Assistant Pastor. If you wish to ask anything further about the Conference email him at [lee.campbel@googlemail.com](mailto:lee.campbel@googlemail.com)*

## A Hole in the Fuel Tank – 10 Reasons Why Churches Stall

*Marcus Honeysett leads the training organisation ‘Living Leadership’, running conferences and workshops for those involved in leadership at various levels. Here he shares with us some of his experience of what can go wrong in church life.*

Several months ago I was on a train which came to an abrupt and terminal stop. We waited for half an hour before the announcement: “Ladies and gentlemen please disembark as there is a large hole in the fuel tank.” This became obvious from the overpowering smell of diesel that hit us as soon as we were outside. I liked being on the train. It was comfortable and they served refreshments. But it wasn’t going anywhere and from inside it was impossible to see why.

Sometimes churches stall and it isn’t always easy to tell from the inside what is wrong. But you don’t necessarily

have to know *what* is wrong to know that *something* is wrong. When a stall occurs one common option is to look at superficial things like style of services or meeting times. It is rare to find a church daring enough to ask if there might be a more foundational hole in the fuel tank.

Here are ten common spiritual reasons churches stall.

- 1) The church forgets who we are and what we are for. 1 Peter says that we are a royal priesthood (who we are) for declaring God’s greatnesses to the world (what we are for). Put simply, the purpose of the church is to go into all the world, making disciples of Jesus, baptising them and teaching them to obey everything He commanded. When we forget that we are the community of disciples for declaring God’s greatness and making disciples, mission quickly becomes just one among many activities rather than the defining vision of who we are as a community.
- 2) The majority of believers are no longer thrilled with the Lord and what He is doing in their lives. When questions like “What is God doing with you at the moment?” cease to be common currency it is a sure sign of creeping spiritual mediocrity. When a large percentage of believers are spiritually stalled, the church stalls too. This commonly happens when people attach themselves to a fellowship because they like the activities and the warm company, but never commit themselves to gospel vision, either because it isn’t explained to them or they have no commitment to it. Woe betide the church that lets people join and take significant responsibility for decisions without being sure that they are wholeheartedly committed to the church’s vision!
- 3) The people get happy with not going anywhere because of the comfort and refreshments on offer. Worse still when people get happy with activities, events, service and even good teaching and preaching but are resistant to challenges to radical living and sacrifice for the gospel. In my view the single biggest cause of stalled churches in the UK is the belief that material comfort can be normative for Christians. It is the opposite of radical commitment to Christ.
- 4) When filler-Christians who have no real commitment to gospel vision outnumber the core of committed believers who do. A filler-Christian adds up everything else they need and want to do for the rest of the week, sees how many hours are left and allocates a certain number of them to church things. They see church as one among many leisure activities, usually low down the priority list. They are unlikely to see the Christian community as God’s great hope for the world and unlikely to put commitment above self-interest.
- 5) When a large percentage of the church are used to being passive receivers of ministry from other people rather than being active self-feeders on the Word of God. It is remarkably easy to persuade ourselves that we have done the spiritual bit for the week because

we have listened to a sermon but with no thought about acting on it. Where people take no personal responsibility for their own spiritual growth a stalled church becomes more likely.

- 6) No life application from the Bible. When preaching, teaching and Bible study become ends in themselves rather than means to an end, something is badly wrong. The aim of no passage of scripture is that we should simply know what it says without the knowledge translating into discipleship and worship. Just as the aim of no Bible passage is that we simply know it (the Devil does that!) but that we follow, obey, submit and worship, so Bible studies and preaching must never exist entirely for their own sake but to see faith, worship and discipleship among the believers.
- 7) A church becomes afraid to ask radical questions. Perhaps a pastor knows that things are foundationally wrong but knows he will be severely resisted (or sacked) if he raises the issue. Perhaps certain activities have passed their sell-by date but have become too dear to those who participate in them to ever deliberately stop them. Churches accrete new activities much more easily than we stop redundant ones and gradually stall under the weight of them. The danger is that people start to equate serving the church with living out the gospel. Few churches regularly evaluate every aspect of church life against their core vision.
- 8) Confusing Christian activities with discipleship. The myriad of opportunities within and without the local church to spend time doing churchy things makes it very easy to believe that doing those activities automatically means we are growing as disciples. This reason for stalling churches is subtle and hard to spot because it may outwardly seem that people are doing good things: attending Christian conferences, going on Christian holidays, sitting on church committees, even ministering or leading in church. All of these can be valuable. The danger arises when we assume that these things are the same thing as living out the gospel. They aren't.
- 9) Not understanding how to release and encourage everyone in the church to use their spiritual gifts for the building up of the church. This stall can take several different forms: the church (or the leader) that expects the leader to do everything and everyone else to do nothing; the church that thinks that everybody participation is not a matter of identifying and utilising gifts but of exercising a vote at a church meeting; the church that doesn't want to be challenged out of a cultural comfort zone and that insists that its leaders act as their chaplains for meeting exclusively internal spiritual needs. There are two types of DNA in churches. One type of church says "we exist to have our personal spiritual needs met", the other "we exist to impact our locality and the world with the gospel of the grace of God in Christ." The first type is a stalled church.

- 10) Moving into maintenance mode. At some point all churches take decisions that tend towards stalling. No church was stalled at the point that it was founded. At the beginning all churches were adventures in faith and daring risk for God. No one actively decided for comfort over risk, but at some point the mindset shifted from uncomfortable faith and daring passion for the Lord to comfortable mediocrity. From an external to internal, from a frontier missions mindset to a homely maintenance mindset. One point this can happen for larger churches is when the initial vision is met. If the founding vision was to see 200 people saved and a full building of converts, it is very easy when this is achieved to move into keeping everyone happy and simply building up those who have come in. But that is to betray the founding vision. When it is reached it is time to ask what the next step of faith should be. However this is always uncomfortable, especially if you have a full building with lots of activities that people enjoy and find unthreatening. The mantra of the maintenance mindset is "if it ain't broke don't fix it." But just like buying shoes for growing children, if structures don't take account of future growth then fellowships end up stunted and deformed. We need to plan for structures, buildings, teams and leaders to grow at the point where the building is full. Any other decision is by definition a decision to stall sooner or later.

One component of leadership is discernment, the ability to bring clarity, vision and sense to situations. The final straw that will lead any church into a stall is when leaders are unable to do so. This might be because they lack skill, opportunity, they face implacable opposition or because they are wounded and isolated. One of the tragedies for sole leaders is when a congregation knows that it only has to dig its heels in enough and it will wear down the ability, capacity and energy necessary to bring vision and change. Stalled congregations are often comfortable being stalled and fiercely resist any attempt to move them out of the rut. The leader ends up drained, permanently discouraged and pulled this way and that by every demand of the congregation.

It is critical for a stalled (or stalling) congregation to ask, "How did we get here? Where is the hole in the fuel tank?" But even more crucial is the question, "Will we look for and follow leaders who can discern, identify, and fix the problem?" The answer to this question will finally determine whether the stall is fixable or fatal.

**Marcus Honeysett**

If you wish to follow up any issues raised in this article please contact Marcus at Living Leadership, [marcus@livingleadership.org](mailto:marcus@livingleadership.org)

# The Training of Pastoral Assistants or Apprentices

*Jonathan Fletcher shares with us his experience of training young men and women for future ministry in the context of local church life. Emmanuel Church Wimbledon, in South-West London, may be much larger than almost all FIEC churches, but the principles he outlines would be refreshingly applicable to many church situations.*

## A Case Study – Emmanuel Church, Wimbledon

With over 500 people passing through our doors to attend one or more of our four services each Sunday, we are blessed with four of us full-time on the staff - but no secretary, administrator or youth worker. We want to run this ship as cheaply as we can so that we are in a position to give away just over half our income to churches overseas or in less affluent areas in the U.K.

The Cornhill Training Course (CTC – operating for us in London but also in other parts of the country) came to our rescue like the U.S. Cavalry charging over the nearby hill! CTC offers a two-year Bible Teaching/Handling course, and in many ways trains people ‘on the job’, which is the way the Master trained His disciples. There are no exams and no qualifications or certificate at the end of this course. Students spend two days a week (Monday or Tuesday in their first year; Thursday and Friday in their second) being taught how to handle the word of God. They are taught at a much deeper level than I would be capable of. The rest of the week – apart from their day off – they are placed in local churches where they put into practice what they have been taught.

For many years we have been privileged to have 4 – 6 Cornhill students each year; from our point of view it’s really slave labour! They are given free accommodation, their Cornhill fees are paid for, their travel to us from Cornhill is covered, and they are given £6,000 pa pocket money.

In their turn, they come with the attitude of wanting to serve – rather than with the attitude of wanting to be trained. It is CTC’s job to train them; they are here to serve. This is why we prefer not to call them ‘apprentices’ but pastoral assistants. And because they serve or work they are technically liable to tax. We are not big enough to employ anybody else full-time during a whole week, but we do get busy at weekends. Wednesday is technically a ‘study-day’, but it is also the day when we have our major staff meeting which the pastoral assistants attend. This is arguably the most important time of the “training” when every aspect of church life is reviewed and they have the opportunity to ask any questions as to why and how things are done in a local church.

On Wednesday evenings each of them will be involved in helping to lead a Bible Study Group, mainly for people

roughly their own age. On Friday evenings each will be part of the leadership team either for our 11-14 year olds or for our 15-18 year old youth groups. Saturday can be partly another day off, but any church event takes priority. On Wednesday afternoons they will all have spent two hours cleaning the church and church halls, and if there are Saturday events they may have to be involved both in the event itself (e.g. a wedding or missionary evening) and be responsible for getting the church ready for Sunday.

On Sunday they are flat out; all attending the four meetings – 9.30am, 11.00am, 6.00pm and 8.00pm – and sharing in the leadership of youth groups at two of those events. In their second year the men may be asked to preach and to lead services.

Emmanuel has been enormously blessed through its Cornhill students. At the so-called practical level their servant-heartedness in keeping the church clean and sparkling is constantly commented on. At the so-called pastoral level, so many parents are hugely appreciative of the wonderful role models these young men and women provide for their children.

The weaknesses are that they are only here for two years and the youth work therefore must also have the continuity of “regular” members of the church family who serve long term. Also, although they are a little team and can therefore encourage one another, unless they have a ‘hinterland’ of other people they relate to locally they can get lonely on their day off.

One size definitely does not fill all, but this pattern has been wonderfully used at Emmanuel.

*Jonathan Fletcher leads the work at Emmanuel Church, Wimbledon. If you want to follow up anything in this article please contact him via the editor*

## A Vision for the Proclamation Trust

*The Proclamation Trust has been a great benefit to many FIEC pastors over the years. The main aim of the Trust is to teach the Bible to preachers in order that they can teach it to others. Adrian Reynolds – pastor of Yateley Baptist Church in Hampshire (a Grace Baptist Church) for the last six years and a member of the Pastors’ Association – has just been appointed as the Trust’s Director of Ministry. We are delighted to have an Independent pastor at the heart of Proc Trust and asked Adrian for a few initial comments. Here are his replies:*

[1] *What do you think the choice of a man from the Independent sector says about the future vision of the Proc Trust?*

I think it’s very encouraging. Many of us have benefited from the PT’s ministry in various ways and one of the things we have valued is the balance it maintains between different constituents of Bible-centred Christianity. This appointment, I trust, helps maintain the

balance and shows that PT is committed to serving free churches.

[2] *How do you assess the training needs of gospel churches in the UK going forwards?*

Unless we serve in mega churches, gospel churches have always needed help in raising up gospel preachers. That has not changed. The mechanisms by which that happens have varied over time and it is good to see a wide range of resources which local churches can tap into. For me, as a die-hard independent and FIEC for most of my Christian life, one of the needs is money; how do smaller churches, in particular, train those who show potential? This is where we need to work more on inter-dependency, perhaps?

[3] *Proc Trust looks to have its roots in conservative evangelical Anglicanism; what can we learn from our Anglican brothers about training gospel workers?*

The answer is the same as the last question. There seems to be a slightly different philosophy about money amongst our Anglican brothers. There are times I would want to be slightly wary of throwing money at every problem – but, equally, there is no doubt that their training (and I'm thinking of in-house rather than college-based training) is well funded through deep generosity. I would love us, as Independents, to see training gospel workers as a key priority which is matched by generous giving.

[4] *At heart, Proc Trust is about encouraging preachers and preaching; how do you assess the challenges facing preachers today. And how can we train the next generation of gospel preachers?*

The challenges are well known and I don't need to repeat them all again. However, in particular, I am conscious that we need to train gospel listeners as well as gospel preachers. Too many preachers are preaching to half-hearted Christians or churches that empty for the evening service. If the preacher really is to prepare the church for works of service, then the church members need to have an attitude of service. If this is lacking then preaching can be a hard graft, discouraging and quickly neglected.

[5] *Tell us about your vision for the future ministry of the Proclamation Trust.*

It might be too early to ask me that question! Broadly I would say that I would love PT to carry on what it is doing well with increasing depth and breadth across the evangelical spectrum. Above all, PT exists to serve the servants, so in one sense the vision needs to come from without rather than within. PT does not set the agenda, we follow and serve local churches. That must remain, and it will mean that an organisation such as PT needs to be constantly on its toes.

[6] *The emphasis in what you have said so far – and in what Proc Trust seeks to do, perhaps – has been very much on training gospel preachers. But do good preachers always make good church leaders? And if*

*not, what kind of training do we need, especially in the free churches, to produce effective leaders as well as preachers?*

I would say, preachers don't always make good church leaders; but good church leaders should always be good preachers! I don't see how else they can lead effectively. Perhaps there is a place for ruling elders rather than teaching elders, but that is a slightly different argument. So, PT can play an important part in developing leaders, but skills in preaching are not the only requisite. I would add all sorts of other qualities from pastoral sensitivity to strategic thinking. But of course, a good preacher wrestles with these daily as he preaches the word because they are all biblical.

[7] *Proc Trust runs a whole range of conferences, courses and activities. If you had to pick one (tough choice!) that you think has been key to Proc Trust's effectiveness over the years, which would it be – and why?*

All the conferences tick different boxes – but for me the EMA is the flagship event. It also serves as a remarkable catalyst for fostering gospel partnership; simply bringing people together under a common desire has that effect.

[8] *What about the question you wished I'd asked.*

Who will win the Ashes? England, of course!

More seriously, Bible centred Christians face both great opportunities and great threats. But the bottom line is that faithful, Spirit-inspired preaching is the church's only hope. So John Owen, in his writing 'On the Mortification of Sin' says this:

"Sometimes in the **reading** of the word God makes a man stay on something that cuts him to the heart, and shakes him as to his present condition. More frequently in the **hearing** of the word preached – his great ordinance for conviction, conversion and edification – does he meet with men."

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